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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to determine the function of a firm within the context of public relations practice. The assessment of James E. Grunig's "Indices for Models of Public Relations" (an instrument for measuring the type of public relations practiced by an organization) was of primary concern. This instrument places public relations practice into four models: (1) one-way asymmetrical primarily serves propaganda purposes; (2) one-way symmetrical provides dissemination of information; (3) two-way asymmetrical attempts to persuade; and (4) two-way symmetrical tries to develop mutual understanding. A sampling of 136 public relations practitioners from the state of Washington responded to the 16-item "Indices" questionnaire in order to describe their job. Results indicated there is no significant relation between the one-way scales and the two-way scales and an inability to clearly distinguish job functions. This information indicates that the "Indices" may not be able to distinguish among the four types of organizations. These "Indices," however, are clearly useful in distinguishing between the two types (one-way or two-way) of public relations organizations. The low explained variance and the low loadings on two items suggest that a more fully developed scale may be more useful. A larger number of items may not only increase the reliabilities, but they may also increase the differentiation among the four models. (Four tables of data are included; 10 notes and a copy of the "Indices" and a Job Function List are attached.) (MG)

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USING GRUNIG'S "INDICES FOR MODELS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS" TO DIFFERENTIATE JOB FUNCTIONS WITHIN ORGANIZATIONS

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ABSTRACT

What is the function of the firm or department within the larger context of public relations practice? This perspective has received little research attention, and it is the one we focus on in this paper. Of particular concern is the assessment of the utility of an instrument for measuring the type of public relations practiced by an organization developed by Grunig ("Indices"). In addition, if organizations function differently, then members of those organizations should perform different job functions. So an additional concern of this paper is to assess whether individuals within organizations differentiated by Grunig's "Indices" actually perform different job functions.

Using a sample of 136 public relations practitioners from the state of Washington, we were unable to find four functions in a factor analysis to match the four "models" developed by Grunig and Hunt. However, we found clear differences between "one-way" and "two-way" types of organizations both in the factor analysis and in the job functions performed within those organizations.

While not advocating abandonment of Grunig's "Indices," we do suggest that rewriting some items and adding others may improve the reliability and utility of the scales.

There are two levels on which one may assess the job function of the public relations practitioner. The first is the individual level. What is the individual's function within the agency or department? This level has had a rich research history within the last ten years.[1] The second is the organizational level. What is the function of the firm or department within the larger context of public relations practice? This second level has received little research attention, and it is the one we will focus on in this paper. Of particular concern is the development of an instrument for measuring the type of public relations practiced by an organization.

Grunig points out that in order to improve the practice of public relations we must understand how and why organizations practice public relations the way they do.[2] With that in mind Grunig and Hunt developed a theoretical conceptualization of public relations practice at the organizational level.[3] That conceptualization posits two dimensions: "one-way vs. two-way" communication; and "asymmetrical" (manipulative) vs. "symmetrical" (informative) communication. The intersection of these two dimensions places public relations practice into four "models": 1) one-way asymmetrical (which Grunig and Hunt call "Press Agentry/Publicity") primarily serves propaganda purposes; 2) one-way symmetrical ("Public Information") provides dissemination of information; 3) "two-way asymmetrical" attempts to persuade; and 4) "two-way symmetrical" tries to develop mutual understanding.[4]

Organizations do not necessarily fit into only one model.

They may practice different types of public relations at different times and in different degrees. So a major concern of researchers, and Grunig in particular, was to develop an instrument to assess the relative degree of each model practiced by an organization.

In 1983, Grunig reported on the development of a scale to measure organizational public relations practice, or "Indices for Models of Public Relations" ("Indices").[5] Turk used those Indices to differentiate state agencies in 1985, and was successful in grouping agencies under the four models.[6] Since that time, Grunig has refined the Indices into a sixteen-item scale (four for each model), with a zero to 100 response rather than the original 7-point measure, but no one has reported a test of the usefulness of the refined Indices.[7] So the purpose of this paper is to assess the usefulness of Grunig's "Indices" in differentiating the functions of public relations organizations. In addition, if organizations function differently, then members of those organizations should perform different job functions. So an additional concern of this paper is to assess whether individuals within organizations differentiated by Grunig's "Indices" actually perform different job functions.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Our research question is simple: Does Grunig's "Indices" differentiate among the four types of public relations practice?

The first task in answering this question is to determine if a factor analysis is able to distinguish four factors, and if the analysis relates the appropriate scale items to those factors. If

four factors cannot be found then our next task is to explore the data to determine what number of factors exist.

In addition to the factor analysis, the four models should have construct validity by allowing us to differentiate among functions within the organization, i.e., the job functions should be different depending on the public relations model under which the individual works.

METHOD

Questionnaire. As part of a mail questionnaire, respondents were asked to fill out the 16-item "Indices" developed by Grunig. The items originally were developed for individuals to describe their organization; we reworote the items for individuals to describe their job. Respondents were asked to indicate if they agreed with each statement on a scale of zero to 100%. Zero percent means total disagreement; 100% means total agreement. So each set of four items can range from zero to 400.

The performance of various public relations functions was also assessed. Respondents were asked to indicate whether they did press monitoring, new product launch, media placement, and so on. If they did, the response was coded "1"; if not, it was coded "0." These items were generated by referring to the public relations job functions listed in Druck, Fiur and Bates.[8]

The questionnaire was pretested with four public relations practitioners from the Seattle area. The "Indices" and list of job functions are contained in the Appendix.

Sampling. There is no single, complete list of public relations organizations in the state of Washington. So we

compiled a list of organizations, departments within companies and individual consultants from two sources: a list of those who had participated in our department's internship program for the past two years, and from the statewide listing of members of the Public Relations Society of America. Duplicate organizations were eliminated from the list and a random sample of 104 names was selected. To each name (which usually was a management person) we sent three questionnaires along with a cover letter explaining the study and asking that the person fill out a questionnaire themselves and to distribute questionnaires to middle or junior management, and to an entry-level person, if such people existed in the organization. This technique was used to represent both the breadth of public relations organizations and the various job categories within the organizations.

Data Collection. On August 23, 1988, questionnaires were sent to the 104 organizations. On September 7 a follow-up mailing was made to those organizations that had not yet responded. Eighty firms or departments had returned at least one questionnaire. Two organizations notified us that they were not public relations companies, and two firms were no longer in business. Of the 100 organizations we obtained an 80% completion rate. Several respondents indicated they were one-person operations and returned the other two questionnaires. We received a total of 137 completed questionnaires, 20 from top management (presidents, owners, etc.), 61 from middle management (e.g., heads of departments), and 56 from staff professionals. One person failed to complete the "Indices." So the total sample size for this study is 136.[9]

Data Analysis. Maximum likelihood factor analysis, searching for a four-factor solution, is used as most appropriate for the confirmatory analysis.[10] If a four-factor solution is not found, then a three factor-solution is sought. Our final analysis simply compares the job function with responses to the set of "Indices." For this analysis simple correlations and "z" significance tests are used.[11]

RESULTS

Table 1 contains a statistical description of the four scales. Given the small number of items per scale, the reliability coefficients are relatively high. They are similar to Grunig's findings in 1983.

TABLES 1 AND 2 ABOUT HERE

The correlations between the scales are contained in Table 2. There is a significant relation between the one-way scales, and a significant relation between the two-way scales. There are no significant relations between the one-way and the two-way scales. These results are also similar to Grunig's 1983 study.

There is no four-factor solution. An attempt at a four-factor analysis resulted in communalities greater than one. This is not surprising since there are significant relations among the four scales.

A three-factor solution is produced and detailed in Table 3. There is low explained variance (total of 13.8%). Items which share at least 10% variance with a factor (loading of .32 or

above) are considered interpretable; the highest loading for each item then is interpreted. Most items for Press Agentry/Publicity and Public Information load on one factor. The two-way scales separate into two factors.

TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

There are two items that have low loadings, one from Public Information: "In my work public relations is more of a neutral disseminator..."; and one from Two-Way Asymmetrical: "My goal is to persuade publics..."

The analysis of the relation between the scales and job function is contained in Table 4. While a few items do not differentiate, such as "Not-for-profit PR" and "Employee bulletins," there are clear distinctions between the one-way organizations and the two-way organizations. In most cases, the job functions are negatively related to being a one-way organization and positively related to being a two-way organization. For example, those organizations higher on both Press Agentry/Publicity and Public Information are significantly less likely to do "Issues management" (negative correlation) while those higher on both Two-Way Asymmetrical and Symmetrical are significantly more likely to perform that function.

TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE

In one case, for "News releases," the one-way organizations

are significantly more likely to perform the function (higher positive correlations) than the two-way organizations.

There is little differentiation within the one-way or two-way organizations. Press Agentry/Publicity and Public Information have the same sign and similar size correlations. In three instances organizations high on Public Information are differentiated from Press Agentry/Publicity. Those higher on Public Information are significantly less likely to "Develop corporate communication goals," do "Corporate PR" and do "Investor relations."

Likewise with the two-way scales, there is little differentiation among job function, although those high on Two-Way Asymmetrical are significantly more likely to do "Customer relations."

DISCUSSION

Although others may have used these indices to differentiate among public relations organizations, our analysis was not able to find four factors. Along with other findings--the relation between the one-way scales, and between the two-way scales, and the inability to clearly distinguish job functions except between one-way vs. two-way--this indicates that the "Indices" may not consistently be able to distinguish four types of organizations. We may only be able to identify two types of organizations: one-way or two-way. These "Indices," however, are clearly useful in distinguishing between these two types of public relations organizations.

In addition, the low explained variance and the low

loadings on two items indicate that a more fully developed scale may be more useful. Other items should be sought and some items should be rewritten. A larger number of items may not only increase the reliabilities, but they may also increase the differentiation among the four models.

While it may be strongly indicated that there are only two types of organizations, we cannot ignore the possibility of four. The limitations of our study--one-time period, one geographic region--should temper our conclusions.

There was clear differentiation among the one-way vs. two-way functions. But there was only a little differentiation between the models within one-way or two-way. Obviously, our list of job functions is not exhaustive. Other functions may be related to specifics within each four models that we have not tapped.

We are not advocating an abandonment of Grunig's "Indices." We do see a limited usefulness in its ability to differentiate the four theoretical types of organizations. We do advocate more study of the "Indices" in different geographic regions and with different organizations, as well as an attempt to improve the items.

NOTES

[1] See, for example: Glen M. Broom and George Smith, "Testing the Practitioner's Impact on Clients," Public Relations Review, 5 (1979), pp. 47-59; Glen M. Broom, "A Comparison of Sex Roles in Public Relations," Public Relations Review, 8 (1982), pp. 17-22; David M. Dozier, "Toward a Reconciliation of 'Role Conflict' in Public Relations Research," paper presented to the Western Communications Educators Conference, Fullerton, Calif., November 1983; Glen M. Broom and David M. Dozier, "Advancement For Public Relations Role Models," Public Relations Review, 12 (1986), pp. 37-55.

[2] James E. Grunig, "Organizations, Environments and Models of Public Relations," paper presented to the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, 1983.

[3] James Grunig and Todd Hunt, Managing Public Relations, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1984).

[4] For a more complete elaboration of the four models see: Grunig and Hunt, Op. Cit. pp.21-43; Grunig, Op. Cit., p. 6.

[5] Ibid.

[6] The original scale used a seven-point response with 27 items while the latest version uses a 0% to 100% response and 16 items. Source: personal correspondence with James E. Grunig, 1/14/1988.

[7] Kalman B. Druck, Merton Fiur and Don Bates, New Technologies and Public Relations, New York: Foundation for Public Relations Research and Education, Inc., 1986.

[8] Respondents represented organizations from around the state, 70% from the Seattle area, but the rest of the state was also represented with 21% from the eastern part of the state. 95% of respondents had a college degree--most (77%) stopped at the Bachelor's level; most college degrees were in the communication area--23% in journalism, 11% in public relations, and 34% in communication; less than 2% had incomes less than $10,000, with the remainder of respondents about equally divided among the next four steps: $10,000-20,000, $20,001-$30,000, and so on; the average age was 34.9 years; and 64% were female.

Respondents had an average of about eight years of public relations experience and an additional 2.7 years of other media experience. They had spent an average of 3.3 years in their present position, and 4.5 years with their present employer.

Respondents came from both profit (61%) and non-profit (39%) organizations, which were both independent public relations firms (37%) as well as departments within larger organizations (63%). Among firms, the average number of employees was 11, and among departments, the average was nine.

[9] Jum C. Nunnally, Psychometric Theory, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1978), pp. 367-368.

[10] Although some might argue for biserial correlations, such tests merely facilitate computation, i.e., those correlations are equivalent to the product-moment correlation. Ibid., p. 134.

APPENDIX

For the following statements, indicate your percent of agreement with each statement. If you agree totally, or if the statement is true all of the time, write 100%. If the statement is never true, or you totally disagree, write 0%.

I am usually so busy writing news stories that I have no time to pay attention to other things, like research.

[%]

I start with attitude surveys to make sure I am describing my organization or client and its policies in ways our publics would be most likely to accept.

[%]

Before beginning a program or campaign I examine the research to determine public attitudes toward my organization or client and how they might be changed.

[%]

Keeping a clipping file is about the only way to determine the success of my work.

[%]

I believe that public relations should provide mediation for the organization or client--to help management and publics negotiate conflict.

[%]

Before starting programs I examine surveys or informal research done by my organization or clients to find out how much management and publics understand each other.

[%]

The work I do is to get favorable publicity into the media and keep unfavorable publicity out.

[%]

I often work to change the attitudes and behaviors of management as much as changing the attitudes and behaviors of publics.

[%]

In my work, public relations is more of a neutral disseminator of information than an advocate for my organization or client, or a mediator between management and publics.

[%]

The work I do is to get publicity for my organization or client.

[%]

(Continued)

Success is measured by the number of people who attended an event I publicized, or the number of people who used the products or services of my organization or client?

[_____%]

After completion of a program or campaign research is conducted to determine how effective my work has been in changing people's attitudes.

[_____%]

My work is intended to develop mutual understanding between the management of my organization or client and the publics my organization or client affects.

[_____%]

My goal is to persuade publics to behave as my organization or client wants them to behave.

[_____%]

I usually work on disseminating information, and do not volunteer unfavorable information.

[_____%]

Public relations and publicity mean the same thing in the work I do for my organization.

[_____%]

JOB FUNCTION LIST

Please indicate which of the following you do. (circle all that apply.)

Public affairs policy planning

Press monitoring

Lobbying

Issues management

New product launch

Teleconferencing

Develop corporate communications goals

Investor relations

Corporate public relations

Not-for-profit public relations

News releases

Employee bulletins

Getting to new clients

"Customer" relations

Budgeting/keeping track of expenses

Table 1

Organization Type Scales Description

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Kurtosis	Skewness	Reliability
Press Agentry/Publicity	179.46	99.41	-.66	-.06	.72
Public Information	145.17	86.72	.54	.18	.55
Two-Way Asymmetrical	138.49	88.22	.23	.43	.60
Two-Way Symmetrical	219.81	95.93	-.49	-.31	.65

Table 2

Correlations Between Organization Types

	Press Agentry	Public Information	Two-Way Asymmetrical
Public Information	.51 *		
Two-Way Asymmetrical	.13	-.07	
Two-Way Symmetrical	.10	-.01	.43 *

* significant at $p < .05$

Table 3

Three-factor Analysis of the Organization Type Scale: Promax Rotated Loadings.

ITEM	Factor one	Factor two	Factor three
I'm usually so busy writing news stories that I have no time to pay attention to other things, like research.(PI)	.44	-.14	.16
I start with attitude surveys to make sure I'm describing my organization or client and its policies in ways our publics would be most likely to accept.(2A)	-.07	.72	.18
Before beginning a program or campaign I examine the research to determine public attitudes toward my organization or client and how they might be changed.(2A)	-.13	.81	.35
Keeping a clipping file is about the only way to determine the success of my work.(PI)	.48	-.19	-.04
I believe that public relations should provide mediation for the organization or client--to help management and publics negotiate conflict.(2S)	.08	.09	.38
Before starting programs I examine surveys or informal research done by my organization or clients to find out how much management and publics understand each other.(2S)	-.01	.73	.46
The work I do is to get favorable publicity into the media and keep unfavorable publicity out.(PA)	.52	.06	.21
I often work to change the attitudes and behaviors of management as much as changing the attitudes and behaviors of publics.(2S)	-.02	.33	.64
In my work, public relations is more of a neutral disseminator of information than an advocate for my organization or client, or a mediator between management and publics.(PI)	.15	-.06	-.02
The work I do is to get publicity for my organization or client.(PA)	.78	.08	-.03
Success is measured by the number of people who attended an event I publicized, or the number of people who used the products or services of my organization or client?(PA)	.71	.31	-.03
After completion of a program or campaign research is conducted to determine how effective my work has been in changing people's attitudes.(2A)	.05	.48	.15

(Table 3 is continued next page)

(Table 3, continued)

My work is intended to develop mutual understanding between the management of my organization or client and the publics my organization or client affects.(2S)	.08	.31	.74
My goal is to persuade publics to behave as my organization or client wants them to behave.(2A)	.29	.14	.21
I usually work on disseminating information, and do not volunteer unfavorable information.(PI)	.56	-.04	.01
Public relations and publicity mean the same thing in the work I do for my organization. (PA)	.55	-.14	-.09
Explained variance	5.0%	5.5%	3.3%

PA = Press Agentry/Publicity item
PI = Public Information item
2A = Two-Way Asymmetrical item
2S = Two-Way Symetrical item

Table 4

Correlations Between Organization Type and Current Job Functions

	Press Agentry	Public Information	Two-Way Asymmetrical	Two-Way Symmetrical
Public affairs policy planning	-.24 *	-.28 *	.23 *	.29 *
Press monitoring	-.05	-.05	.07	.06
Lobbying	-.19 *	-.13	.00	.04
Issues management	-.32 *	-.27 *	.18 *	.31 *
New product launch	.07	-.08	.33 *	.20 *
Develop corporate communication goals	-.16	-.25 *	.29 *	.34 *
Investor relations	-.23 *	-.08	.02	.16
Corporate PR	-.13	-.21 *	.27 *	.31 *
Not-for-profit PR	.12	.07	.14	.14
News releases	.31 *	.25 *	.18 *	.16
Employee bulletins	-.11	-.09	.11	.13
Getting to new clients	-.01	-.12	.20 *	.18 *
Customer relations	-.03	-.10	.29 *	.05
Budget/tracking expenses	-.11	-.10	.15	.21 *

* $p < .05$.